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Living with Historic Preservation: A Study of the Past as it is Remembered in the Present by Three Case Studies in the City of Poughkeepsie, New York

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LIVING WITH HISTORIC PRESERVATION

A study of the past as it is remembered in the present by three case studies in the city of Poughkeepsie, New York

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“The things that we can see and touch are those that awaken our imagination.”

— Lewis Mumford

From “The Value of Local History” paper read at Troutbeck, 15 September 1926,
Dutchess County Historical Society Year Book, Vol. 74, 1989, 11.

INTRODUCTION

What do old buildings mean in the context of a contemporary city? Are they left for touristic ambiance and charm? Are they still functioning members of a city's fabric—either in their original function or repurposed? The answers to these questions are innumerable. Every city in the world deals with the dichotomy of old and new, and the city of Poughkeepsie, New York is no exception.

Located in the mid-Hudson valley, Poughkeepsie is the midpoint between New York City and Albany. Throughout its history, transportation has always been critical to Poughkeepsie's growth. In 1814 the city became the first steamboat terminal between New York City and Albany and then the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 increased traffic along the Hudson and expanded opportunities for trade and industry in the region.[1]

The Hudson River towns came to rely on the river for trade and its most prosperous industries such as fishing and ice harvesting. In 1830, Matthew Vassar moved his brewery to the riverfront, which began a boom of manufacturing industries that used the resources of the river to produce its product. Textile, silk and carpet factories all began to use the Fall Kill for waterpower and the Hudson for exporting goods.[2]

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[1] Sandra Opdycke, "With Prosperity All Around: Urban Issues in Poughkeepsie, NY 1950-1980," *Dutchess County Historical Society Year Book* 75, (1990): 63.
[2] Harvey K. Flad and Clyde Griffen, *Main Street to Mainframes: Landscape and Social Change in Poughkeepsie* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 15.

Next in Poughkeepsie's history of transportation came the railroads. The Poughkeepsie station was the northern-most point where the east/west rail line from as far as Chicago met the north/south line into New York City.[3] It was an important hub not just for commercial transport but also travelers. Then when automobiles began to take over transportation, Poughkeepsie continued its importance, as it was the principal location for the meeting of the north/south and east/west highways.[4]

Poughkeepsie and other Hudson riverside towns became prosperous foci of the region throughout the nineteenth century where the wealthy invested in its property and economy. Remnants of this time are seen all over the downtown area. Large residencies, regal bank buildings, the dignified post office, and train station—almost all built within the span of thirty years around the late nineteenth to early twentieth century.

The three examples in this paper were built during this time of economic prosperity in Poughkeepsie. First, the Vassar Home for Aged Men built in 1880 and the Vassar Brothers Institute in 1883, both on Vassar Street are examples of Italianate Victorian architecture, a popular style for civic architecture at this time. Next built was the Hasbrouck House on 75 Market Street in 1885. The Hasbrouck House is an example of the large domestic architecture built for the city's wealthy and stands out as an example of the Richardsonian style. Lastly was the Poughkeepsie Trust Company bank building built in 1906. Its five-story white stone carved façade mimics the early skyscrapers of New York City on a smaller scale. Its designer sought to exude a similar grandeur and modern aesthetic for Poughkeepsie.

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[3] Opdycke, "With Prosperity All Around," 62.
[4] Opdycke, "With Prosperity All Around," 64.

The era of architectural entrepreneurship that produced these and other notable Poughkeepsie landmarks concluded as the Hudson Valley region's economic importance faded in the mid-twentieth century. The next period of building in Poughkeepsie came with the waves of urban renewal in the 1950s and 1980s that built many existing civic structures in the downtown district. This renewal also tore down buildings to make way for parking lots and highways.

What merits preservation and what falls to progress is a problem that has plagued Poughkeepsie for the past eighty years. Only in the past thirty years has Poughkeepsie begun to protect its past by preserving buildings. But historic preservation is not as simple as slapping on a plaque. That the identities of the buildings change, both physically and ideologically since they were constructed, must be reconciled with its modern context. The extent to which the buildings can and will adapt to fulfill a modern function are key to their survival. If a building cannot adapt, the likelihood of its survival diminishes.

But once a building passes on to a new set of users, which pieces of its history rise to the surface and which portions are forgotten? The answers to this question can reveal an intimate detail of living with historic preservation. How a group of users respond to a space physically and emotionally show the significance of a building to a community. What becomes most important is not the historical facts but the way the

building's history has been interpreted by time. In short, "we shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us."[5]

This thesis will examine living with historic preservation in two manners: the way the building physically changed, and the way the history of the building has weathered over the years. Matching up the changes in a building's use over its lifetime and the ways it has or has not adapted from the perspective of its users provides a lens by which one can view the way the history and mythology of the building survive. What pieces of its past are remembered and which are forgotten? What has become incorporated into the history of the building that is not historical or known to be factual? Does a building have ghosts or notable visitors from its past?

Based on the research and results illustrated in this thesis, a pattern between the types of spaces and the histories that users preserve appears. Spaces whose physical form recall a function that is different from its current use such as the Poughkeepsie Trust Co. building and the Vassar Street buildings tend to place greater emphasis on its past. By contrast, users of a building whose architecture is more ambiguous, such as the Hasbrouck House at 75 Market, tend to place less significance on the past and more on its place in the present. The following case studies further illustrate this correlation.

[5] Winston Churchill quoted in: Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What happens after they're built* (New York: Penguin, 1994) 5.

CHAPTER 1: "THE COPY ROOM IN A VAULT"

Dutchess County's District Attorneys Office, formerly The Poughkeepsie Trust Company, located at 236 Main Street

The first example of a building whose appearance draws attention to its history is the Dutchess County's District Attorney's office. The office occupies a former bank building of grand scale. The first floor's lobby retains the original teller booths and the upper levels are converted office spaces. The bank was the Poughkeepsie Trust Company, one of the first large banks in the Hudson Valley. The daily movements of the DA's office deal with the past of the building, as it is readily visible and encountered routinely. This type of historic space shapes the way users preserve its history in a manner that is mainly basic fact.

The Poughkeepsie Trust Company, located at 236 Main Street, was designed by Percival Lloyd and finished construction in 1906. For seventy-six years, prior to the current building's construction, the lot was occupied by another, far more modest banking building with classical Greek elements (Figure 1.1).[6] Banks in the mid-nineteenth century sought an architectural image of permanence and solidity to attract depositors.[7] By rebuilding, the company sought to reestablish itself in the growing modern city of Poughkeepsie and also sought to make the banking process more

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[6] William V. Grady, Interview by Katharine George, Personal interview, (236 Main Street, Poughkeepsie, NY) October 28, 2011.

[7] William B. Rhoads, "Poughkeepsie's Architectural Styles 1835-1940: Anarchy or Decorum?" in *New Perspectives on Poughkeepsie's Past,* ed. Clyde Griffen, (New York: The Dutchess County Historical Society, 1988) 19.

efficient and secure. The new Trust Co. building was the first modern "skyscraper" in the Hudson Valley, standing at five stories high with a manually operated elevator.[8]

Figure 1.1 Poughkeepsie Bank (later Trust Company), 1830 (National Register of Historic Places nomination, Poughkeepsie Trust Company).

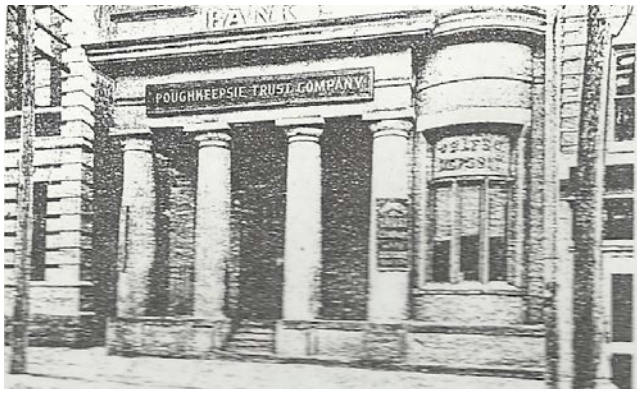


Figure 1.2 Poughkeepsie Trust Company 1906 design (Katharine George, 2011).

[8] Poughkeepsie of Today (1906) called Lloyd's design "Poughkeepsie's first skyscraper," quoted in Rhoads, "Poughkeepsie's Architectural Styles 1835-1940" 38.

Lloyd's small skyscraper design was in the symmetrical Beaux-Arts style with a stone-carved façade divided into three bays. The interior framing is made of brick, steel and stone, which were standard materials used to construct the first skyscrapers of the twentieth century. The design incorporated "heavy Renaissance ornament" that covered larger New York skyscrapers such as the Flatiron Building (1902).[9]

The way the building was designed, particularly the parts seen by the customer, show how the new building was intended to convey a message of grandeur and wealth. Both the façade and lobby of the building are elaborately ornamented beyond their structural elements. The first skyscrapers of the late nineteenth century went "beyond the necessities of real estate operation to advertise their own wealth, solidarity, and public spirit."[10] It is clear that the Trust Co. building does the same. The carved stone façade (Figure 1.2) has a leafy motif above the frieze, pilasters and decorative Doric columns. Along the side of the building is a red and yellow brick diamond pattern to add interest to the solid brick side of the building (Figure 1.3). An intricate wrought-iron gate also stands to the left of the building with the date of the building's completion in 1906 (Figure 1.4). The lobby of the building consists of marble floor, ionic columns, hanging gold lamps, and coffered ceiling (Figure 1.6). These decorative embellishments are original to the design and enhance the visual experience of the customer. All these features, on both the inside and out are purely decorative, therefore showing the desire of the architect and the client, Poughkeepsie Trust Co., to create a space that communicates more than just its functions as a

[9] Rhoads, "Poughkeepsie's Architectural Styles 1835-1940," 29.
[10] Daniel Bluestone, "Skyscrapers, 1880-1895," *Constructing Chicago* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 128.

bank—a building that embodies the progress of the time and the security or wealth of its users.

Figure 1.3 Poughkeepsie Trust Company 1906 design, western façade (Google Images, 2008).

Figure 1.4 Iron gate to left of front entrance, original to 1906 design (George, 2011).

Beyond its decoration, the Poughkeepsie Trust Co. building had respect the functions for which it was built. Foremost, the building had to include the infrastructure for banking, such as teller booths and vaults. The main entrance is through double doors on the left corner of the building that lead into the lobby. As it was originally constructed, the lobby contained three lines of teller booths facing towards the center of the room (Figure 1.5). In the middle was a table where customers could fill out deposit slips and other forms. In the back of the building were the bank's office spaces and main vault. Above, on the second floor was a conference room with a large glass and iron window that looks down into the lobby area (Figure 1.6). As the bank only took up the first two stories of the building, the upper levels were rented out to other professionals. This was incorporated into the original plan of the building and accounts for the second street entrance on the right side that leads to the upper levels of the building via elevator or stairs.

Among the first tenants of the upper levels was the New York City Water Supply Commission, which rented the fourth and fifth stories until the building was ultimately taken over by the county when the Poughkeepsie Trust Co. Bank merged with Bank of New York. When taken over by the county, the building was linked to the Dutchess County Courthouse, which is located adjacent to it on Market Street (Figure 1.7). The building was used for office and meeting space. Slight alterations were made to the floor plan such as the removal of two of the three rows of teller

booths in the lobby to make meeting space (Figure 1.8). Small alterations continued until 1982 when the building was added to the National Register of Historic Places.[11]

Figure 1.5 Poughkeepsie Trust Co. Bank lobby interior, 1907 (National Register of Historic Places nomination, Poughkeepsie Trust Company).

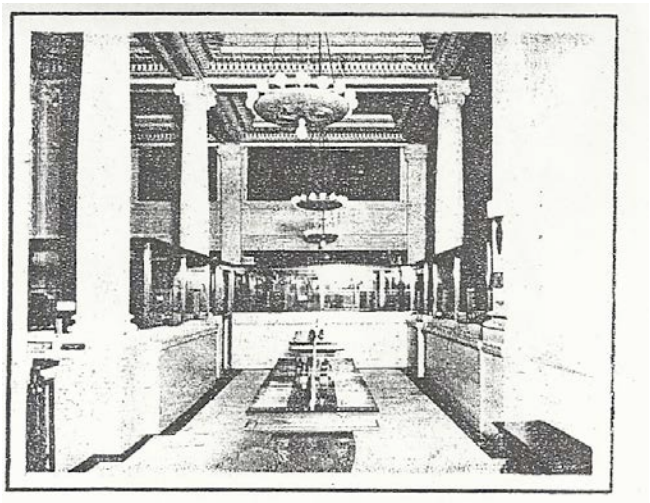


Figure 1.6 Dutchess County District Attorneys Office lobby interior (George, 2011).

[11] Townley Sharp, "National Register of Historic Places nomination, Poughkeepsie Trust Company," 1.

Today, the Poughkeepsie Trust Company building is used only by the District Attorney's Office. Before settling in at 236 Main Street, the District Attorney's office had moved around the downtown Poughkeepsie area wherever space was available.[12] In 1997, the DA moved into the Poughkeepsie Trust Co. building following some renovations to accommodate the office's many employees.[13] The basic structure of the building suited the needs of the DA's office well. A separate entrance to the offices on one side provided necessary security measures and the building's close proximity to other governmental offices such as the Court House and Town Hall (Figure 1.7).

As it is a registered historic building, the plans to accommodate the District Attorney's office had to follow specific rules and standards to respect the original character and design. Beginning in the lobby there is a clear distinction between the old and new. The original bank lobby had three large teller booths made of glass, marble and brass facing into the center of the room (Figure 1.5). Two were removed sometime prior to 1982, and the one remaining on the left side of the lobby stands adjacent to an oak secretarial station attached for the needs of the DA's office (Figure 1.6). The glass on the teller booth was fogged so it could be used as private office space on the other side.

A tour of the interior spaces and upper levels revealed the adaptability of the buildings to the office's needs. On the first floor, behind the bank teller-cubicle was the original bank's vault. District Attorney Bill Grady explained that the safe was left closed until about five years ago when the office decided to turn it into a copy room.

[12] Interview with William V. Grady, October 28, 2011.
[13] Interview with William V. Grady, October 28, 2011.

They added carpets and dropped the ceiling, making it look like any typical office room, except for the giant safe door (Figure 1.9).

Figure 1.7 Map of Market and Main Street intersection, 236 Main Street is outlined in bold line, shows proximity to Dutchess County Court House and Poughkeepsie Town Hall (National Register of Historic Places nomination, Poughkeepsie Trust Company, 1982).

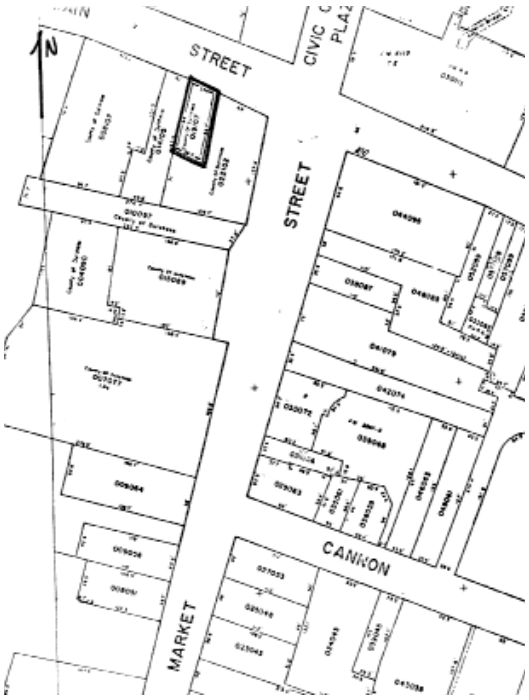


Figure 1.8 Poughkeepsie Trust Co. Bank lobby interior, circa 1982 (National Register of Historic Places nomination, Poughkeepsie Trust Company).

The upper levels of the office, though originally office spaces, were gutted and re-done when the DA moved in because the original rooms were too large. They rebuilt the walls to fit as many offices as possible on each floor.[14] All the doorframes and moldings were replaced to match the original oak wood. The original nine-foot ceilings were also dropped to make, in Grady's words, "a more cozy work environment."[15]

The original staircase that runs through the left side of all six stories is what Grady called the "heart of the office." The staircase allows for people to circulate throughout the building in a way that promotes interaction between floors. What makes this particular staircase special according to Grady is the way it is intertwined with the motion of the office. A typical modern office space would of course have staircases but are generally sequestered to the corners and closed off with a door. The Trust Co. staircase has no physical barriers except for a railing and leads right off of the main hallway. As it is an enormous waste of space, no such staircase would be found in the typical office but the interaction between floors is increased by this original piece of the floor plan left untouched.

The employees in the DA's office responded positively to their work environment. Everyone seemed to love working in such a beautiful, historic building. The secretary added that working in a distinctive building makes it easier to direct people to the office. She also noted that visitors commonly ask when the building was built and what it was for while waiting in the lobby, "I presume because this would be one fancy lobby for your average lawyer's office," she added. Grady described

[14] Interview with William V. Grady, October 28, 2011.
[15] Interview with William V. Grady, October 28, 2011.

feeling a "sense of pride in the work that they do, knowing the history and nature of the building." Though it is no longer used as a bank, Grady explained that, "it is still a professional building as it always has been, just a different profession."[16]

Figure 1.9 Original vault door from 1906 design (George, 2011).

[16] Interview with William V. Grady, October 28, 2011.

CHAPTER 2: CUNNEEN-HACKETT

The Cunneen- Hackett Arts Center, formerly The Vassar Brothers Institute and Vassar Home for Aged Men, located at 9 and 12 Vassar Street

Right off of Main Street on a narrow one-way alley called "Vassar Street" sit the Cunneen-Hackett Arts Center buildings. Like the Poughkeepsie Trust Co., the past of the art center buildings is present in their daily life. The colorful ornate Victorian exterior attracts attention and building's history brings it business. The interior is plastered in informational plaques and relics of the previous inhabitants.

The location on Vassar Street is aptly named as both the arts center buildings were built and owned by the Vassar family. First, the Vassar Home for Aged Men, built in 1880 on the site of Vassar's childhood home (Figure 2.1). Second, the Vassar Brothers Institute built in 1883 on the foundations of the original Vassar Brewery (Figure 2.2). Both structures were built after Vassar's death by his nephews to further the Vassar family's engagement with the community and its culture.

The original Vassar Ale brewery was located on Vassar Street, a modest wood and brick building that lasted until 1862 when it was destroyed by a fire (Figure 2.2). John Guy and Matthew Jr., Vassar's nephews, built the Vassar Brother Institute on its ruins twenty years later. The Vassar Institute building is a two-story, three-bay building of brick with granite trim.[17] On the side of the building the brick color changes near the bottom; the darker bricks mark the remaining foundation of the brewery. J. A. Wood designed the building in an Italianate-French mansarded style

[17] William B. Rhoads, "Poughkeepsie's Architectural Styles 1835-1940: Anarchy or Decorum?" in *New Perspectives on Poughkeepsie's Past,* ed. Clyde Griffen (New York: The Dutchess County Historical Society, 1988), 24.

resembling Main Building of Vassar College with its central mansard dome and dormer windows.[18] But unlike Main Building, the Institute's design called for bright polychromatic brick and granite walls, with pilasters and cast-iron porch columns.[19]

Figure 2.1 Matthew Vassar's childhood home, located at 9 Vassar Street (Cunneen-Hackett Art Center, Matthew Vassar archives).

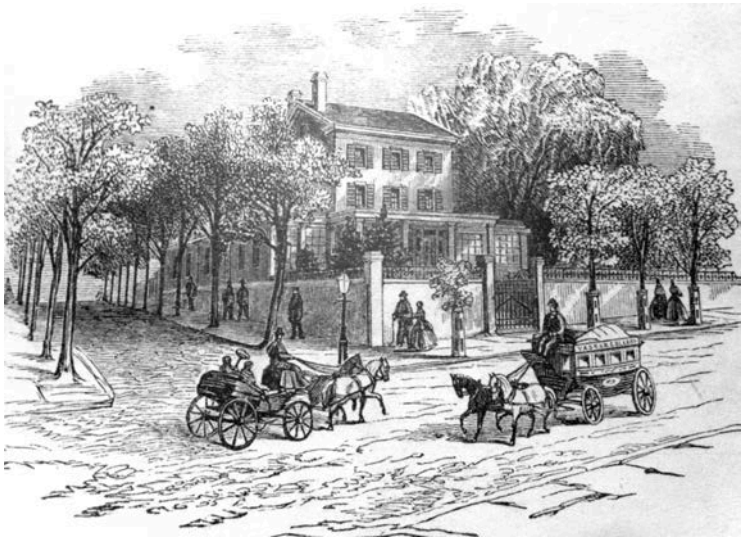
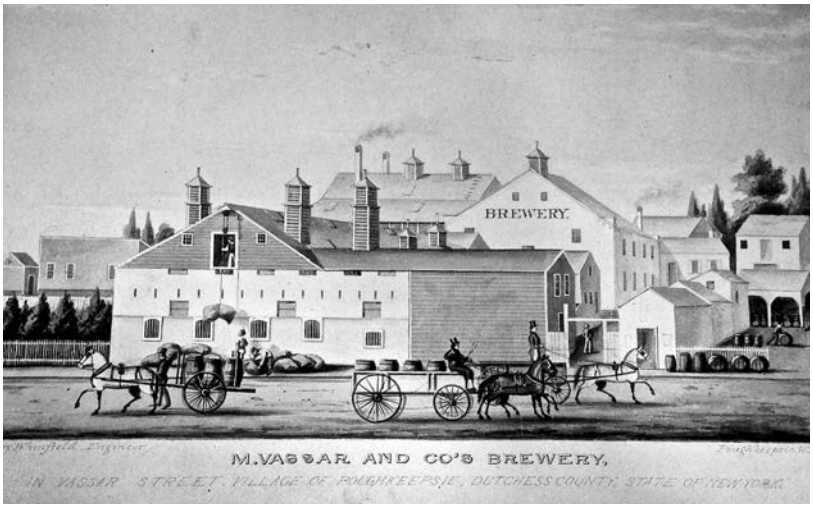


Figure 2.2 Matthew Vassar's first brewery located at 12 Vassar Street (Matthew Vassar Brewery file, Vassar Special Collections).



[18] Rhoads, "Poughkeepsie's Architectural Styles 1835-1940," 24.
[19] Rhoads, "Poughkeepsie's Architectural Styles 1835-1940," 24.

Figure 2.3 Vassar Institute circa 1930 (Cunneen-Hackett Art Center, Vassar Institute Archives).

Figure 2.4 Vassar Institute today (George, 2013).

Figure 2.5 Vassar Institute side brick detail, lower brick portion (the faded part) is the original from Vassar's brewery (George, 2013).

Figure 2.6 Vassar Institute Auditorium (George, 2013).

The building's adorned exterior is a direct contrast to its spacious, open interior. The main entrance opens onto a hall, which leads to the auditorium at the rear. The auditorium holds approximately 200 original cast-iron seats, arranged on four descending, curving levels. On either side is a balcony with circular box, supported by wooden columns.

Between 1850 and 1900, private or semi-private non-profit cultural institutions were a growing trend in the northeast.[20] The Vassar Brothers Institute followed this trend among urban elites to build an organizational form that sought to separate "high culture" from "popular culture."[21] The first floor was a museum with a large theater in the back. The second floor was a library and the third floor was an art studio. Only the theater and the art studio have kept their original function.

Physically, the Institute building's interior and exterior are intact. The largest change to the exterior was the removal of a large copper dome and spire that sat on top of the central pavilion (Figure 2.3). Its removal was due to its expensive upkeep.

Today the Vassar Brothers Institute still exists but it outgrew the building early in the twentieth century. Around 1930 the building was used by the Eastman Business College for classes and the theater as a lecture hall. It is unknown how long the business school occupied the building, however by the 1960s the Institute was vacant and in disrepair.[22]

Across the street, the Vassar Home for Aged Men is a three-story building built by Vassar's nephews on the site of his childhood home. It is nine bays wide on its front facade, faced in brick with a running granite trim (Figure 2.7). A five-bay pavilion projects from the east, with a veranda running its full length. It is enclosed by a baluster railing, which continues down the steps, and supported by freestanding

[20] Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: the Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America," *Media, Culture and Society* 1984: 4, 33.
[21] DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston," 33.
[22] Virginia Hancock, interview by Katharine George, Personal interview, 12 Vassar Street, Poughkeepsie, NY, Tuesday November 19, 2013.

columns at the front and engaged ones at the rear. Vassar's nephews incorporated some of the original house's interior trim, such as the black marble mantels into the new home.

The home was completed in 1880 and officially opened the following year. Designed for 50 men, it was initially home to six. It continued to operate below capacity until 1903, when the death of Matthew Vassar's widow made enough money available. The home remained a place of elderly care until the early 1970s.[23]

Figure 2.7 Vassar Home for Aged Men, circa 1930 (Cunneen-Hackett Art Center, Vassar Home for Aged Men Archives).

[23] Stephanie Mauri, "National Register of Historic Places, Vassar Institute," New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (May 1971).

In the mid 1970s, the fate of both buildings on Vassar Street became linked to the City of Poughkeepsie's plans for a modern Central Business District. Plans to create a central core of public and private civic structures at the intersection of Main and Market Street culminated with the Mid-Hudson Civic Center and the Grand Hotel with adjoined ice rink across the street.[24] However not long after the Civic Center complex's completion, a study done by the Poughkeepsie Urban Renewal Agency in 1979 concluded that more was needed to promote an artistic and cultural presence in the CBD (Central Business District).[25] The city's response to the study was the allocation of the two Vassar Street buildings to become centers for the fine and performing arts.[26]

The Charlotte Cunneen-Hackett trust, an organization established in support of the fine and performing arts, had already been around for many years but did not have a permanent home. The desires of the CBD provided the Cunneen-Hackett Trust with the opportunity to establish itself in the community by offering it the Vassar Street buildings. Thus it was the well-timed confluence of separate entities that brought Cunneen-Hackett onto Vassar Street. The CBD looking to extend its cultural programming as well as an organization to take up that mantel, the Vassar Institute and Home for Aged men buildings recent vacancy, and lastly the Cunneen-Hackett trust looking to establish itself in the community. With the help of federal funding,

[24] Harvey K Flad and Clyde Griffen, *Main Street to Mainframes: Landscape and Social Change in Poughkeepsie* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 219.
[25] Opdycke, "With Prosperity All Around," 67.
[26] Flad and Griffen, *Main Street to Mainframes*, 358-359; Hancock interview.

the Vassar Street buildings were fixed to be fit for use and the first official board meeting of the Cunneen-Hackett Arts Center was held in 1981.

The Cunneen-Hackett Arts Center functions as a flexible community space that is rented out and used by a variety of patrons, businesses, artists and organizations (Figure 2.8). The majority of the revenue comes from tenants who rent out available studio and office spaces on the upper levels of both buildings. In the Institute building, teachers rent out the large studio spaces for art instruction and dance. In Home for Aged Men building small businesses like a massage therapist and tutoring agencies rent small rooms on the second floor (originally the bedrooms of the elderly). Other community and private events are held in the large downstairs spaces of both buildings such as gallery shows, silent auctions, galas, conferences, workshops, music concerts, even sweet sixteen's, bridal showers and political group fundraisers. The Aged Men building in particular lends itself well for period-specific events. The large Victorian parlors of the first floor are spacious but also heavily decorated with wallpaper, drapes, period-appropriate furniture and artwork (Figure 2.9).

Overall the Vassar Street buildings function well for Cunneen-Hackett, according to users. The Board of Trustees is in charge of running the cultural center and all historic preservations; they make decisions on maintenance, cost and fundraising. Of course there are issues and adjustments to be made. Upkeep is expensive and the board is currently considering a capital campaign for the Institute auditorium—it is out-of-date technologically and limited in its versatility. The front entryway of the Aged Men building is currently blocked because it is unsafe for use.

But it was generally never used anyway—the main entrance was moved to the side of the building because that is where the administrative offices are, and needed to keep track of people coming into the building.

Figure 2.8 Cunneen-Hackett office directory (George, 2013).

Figure 2.9 Vassar Home for Aged Men interior parlor with era-appropriate furniture and décor (George, 2013).

Virginia Hancock, a member on the board of trustees since the early 1990s believes that it is the character of the buildings that give them their appeal. People look for interesting, authentic spaces for certain events and find that in Cunneen-Hackett. Hancock argued that the space adds a whole other dimension an event—it "elevates" the activity, saying, "there's just so much emotion in this place, you feel like it's an honor to be here." Hancock described a piano concert to further illustrate her point: listening to a pianist in an authentic Victorian parlor, "just like it would be in old times" is "so cool…you just feel such a connection to the past in these buildings."

For the Cunneen-Hackett Arts Center, the histories of the two Vassar Street sites are as important as what stands there today. When asked about the history of the buildings, one of the first pieces of information given by Hancock was that Matthew Vassar's first Brewery was on the site of the Institute building. Vassar built it when he was eighteen years old in 1813, and it served as the main center of production until the riverfront brewery was built in 1836.[27] For the Vassar Aged Men Home, the story of the magnolia tree in front of the house was retold: it is the same tree that was there when Matthew Vassar lived there as a child. The story goes that Vassar took a flower from the tree and placed it on Abraham Lincoln's coffin as his funeral parade came through the Poughkeepsie rail station. These stories are important to the business of the Arts Center buildings and the legacy they set for themselves. It is how they sell themselves to the community and promote their significance as historical artifact.

[27] "Passing of Old Vassar Brewery," *Poughkeepsie Enterprise,* November 11, 1909.

CHAPTER 3: A HOUSE, NOT A HOME

The United Way of Dutchess County, formerly The Hasbrouck House, located at 75 Market Street

A large banner reading "DUTCHESS COUNTY UNITED WAY" is what first catches the viewer's attention when passing 75 Market Street in downtown Poughkeepsie. The Romanesque brick house is clearly visible but does not stand out to a passerby. Its location in the business district of Poughkeepsie and the United Way banner place its function as an office building but the lack of distinguishing features sets it apart in the users mind from historic buildings such as those on Vassar Street and The DA's Office.

The house at 75 Market was built in the Romanesque revival style by Frederick Clarke Withers in 1885. The house was built for Frank Hasbrouck, a judge and local historian, thus earning the name "Hasbrouck House."[28] (Figure 3.1) The Romanesque revival style is not seen widely in Poughkeepsie except on Market Street. The New York State Armory building in Poughkeepsie, just a few doors up Market Street, was built in the same Romanesque style in 1891.[29]

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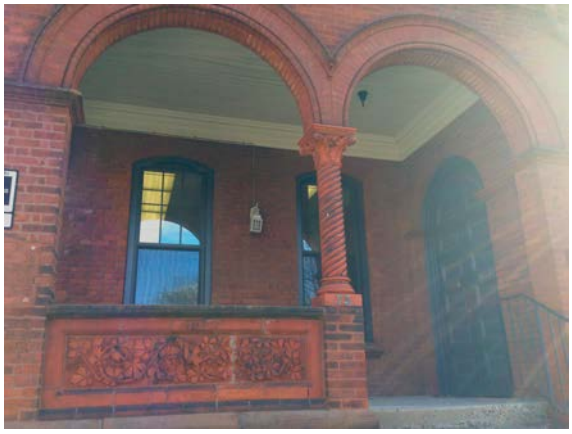
[28] Townley Sharp, "National Register of Historic Places nomination, Hasbrouck House," (1980).

[29] William B. Rhoads, "Poughkeepsie's Architectural Styles 1835-1940: Anarchy or Decorum?" in *New Perspectives on Poughkeepsie's Past,* ed. Clyde Griffen (New York: The Dutchess County Historical Society, 1988) 27.

Figure 3.1 Frank Hasbrouck house, 1885 (William Rhoads, *Poughkeepsie's Architectural Styles 1835 – 1940*).

Figure 3.2 Dutchess County United Way, 75 Market Street (Google image search, 2008).

Figure 3.3 United Way entry detail (George, 2013).



The Hasbrouck House did not remain a house for very long. It was not a marketable family home due to its enormous size and location in the growing business district of downtown Poughkeepsie. For a while in the early twentieth century (exact dates unknown) the house served as dormitory for orphan boys.[30] By this time the house was owned by the state and became a temporary office space for the American Bar Association. Around the early 1930s, each floor of the building housed a different group: the third floor was occupied by a community foundation, the second floor was the United Way and the first floor was the Bar Association.

In 1936 the whole building was donated by the city to the United Way of Dutchess County with the provision that they had to stay in the building for at least 5 years before it was theirs to do with it what they wanted. Even a simple act like putting holes in the walls to hang pictures was forbidden. The provision was presumably to make sure the building stayed within the city's control and was not sold or demolished. Even after the building was theirs, the United Way continued to share the space at 75 Market with other community organizations until the 1950s, making few changes to its design.

Today the building at 75 Market is little changed both inside and out. The brick Richardsonian structure is comprised of two wings with a turret entryway connecting them. On the front of the building facing the street is an oriel window (Figure 3.2). The main entry to the building is covered with a double arch portico (Figure 3.3). The column is decorated with a spiral flute. Below the left arch is a

[30] Dr. Donald Hammond, interview by Katharine George, 75 Market Street, Poughkeepsie, NY. Tuesday November 19, 2013. All further statements from Hammond are from this interview.

decorative terracotta floral frieze that continues on the sides of the building (Figure 3.3).

Inside, a great brick fireplace in the middle of the central hallway is first to greet a visitor. A defining characteristic of the building, every room has its own fireplace with a different decorative tile work (Figures 3.4-6). The main fireplace however is all brick arranged in undulating patterns, with a terracotta-tiled hearth (Figure 3.7). If a visitor had not guessed the building's domestic character, they might now.

Moving through the building, the rooms are organized off a central hallway connected by a mahogany-banister staircase that goes up to the second and third floors (Figure 3.8). Each former bedroom is an office—some shared, some private. Occupants of the offices used the fireplace color scheme and tile work as inspiration for their interior decoration. Because there is no built-in storage or utility space in the office, most communal amenities like the printers, fax machines and office supplies are organized in the hallway (Figure 3.9). Closets off the main hallway are also fitted to meet storage needs.

The third floor spaces are the most unusual due to the angles of the roof and windows. This provides unique office spaces, embraced decoratively by some, while others just try to make them fit their needs (Figures 3.10-11).

The only unoccupied floor in the house is the basement. For many years local organizations rented it as office space, but because it is not an ideal setup, it has been vacant for many years. Jennifer Pawenski, the secretary for United Way explained that a few years ago they were trying to come up with a use for the space when they

decided on its current function: a donation center.[31] United Way is continuously receiving donations and stores them in the basement. Once a month they open the basement to community organizations to come and take any items they might want or need. Pawenski explained that the basement works very well for this purpose because there is a separate back entrance to the basement and plenty of room to set up tables with the assorted donated goods. Bags, clothes, shoes and toiletries are neatly organized around the basement, turning the office building's basement into a kind of thrift store (Figures 3.12-14).

Figures 3.4 – 3.6 Three examples of fireplaces found in United Way offices (George, 2013).



To its users, the history of 75 Market is a fuzzy combination of hearsay, legend and fact. Before looking into the factual history of the building for himself, Dr. Donald Hammond, President and CEO of United Way, recalled that the first things he knew about the building were stories about its ghost. Hammond explained

[31] Jennifer Pawenski, interview by Katharine George, Personal interview, 75 Market Street, Poughkeepsie, NY, Tuesday November 19, 2013.

the known and widely accepted opinion that they have a resident ghost, "Mr. Samuels," who is said to have died in the house. Mr. Samuels likes to play pranks on them like turning on lights and printers and even made coffee one morning before anyone was in the building.

Donald Hammond recalled his first impression of the building two and a half years ago: beautiful, but in need of maintenance. Hammond joined United Way in 2010 when the Dutchess and Orange County branches merged. In addition to overseeing the daily operations of Dutchess and Orange Counties United Way, Hammond also sits on the Board of Trustees, which makes all financial decisions regarding the upkeep of 75 Market.

Since his arrival there have been a number of projects undertaken to "spruce" up United Way. All windows were replaced, which cut their monthly heating bill in half. A new boiler was also installed last year; the house still uses the original radiant heating. Hammond also had the front gate that surrounded the property (with large "KEEP OUT" signs attached) taken away, and installed a new security system in the main entrance where visitors need to be buzzed in. Lastly, and in Hammond's opinion most importantly, was the repainting of the interior "dirty white" walls, which brightened up the house. From a booklet of Benjamin Moore's historic color palette, employees got to choose what color he or she wanted for their office. Many based their selections off of the only pre-existent decorative element in the room: their fireplace.

Figure 3.7 Main entryway brick fireplace (George, 2013).

Figure 3.8 Main staircase with carpeted stairs and original wood banister (George, 2013).

As a non-profit organization, finding funding for the upkeep of an old historic building can be difficult. Hammond explained the process by which the Board reviews the needs of the building, prioritizes them, and seeks funding for the projects. Most often, the Board applies for foundation grants but will occasionally solicit donations. For many years the Dyson Foundation funded maintenance projects for the building, which allowed them to replace the windows and the boiler. Within the next five years the house's slate roof will have to be replaced, an expensive and specialized procedure, for which the Board might launch a capital campaign. Jennifer Pawenski, Hammond's assistant and secretary for United Way talked about her difficult task of finding someone who can replace slate roofs—a dying niche of the roofing business.[32]

Aside from upkeep, the house at 75 Market poses other challenges to the daily operation of United Way. Each floor of the building is a different department, which creates boundaries—staff members have to make an effort to interact with other departments as well as the community. Hammond explained that ideally the Fund Department would be on the first floor because they have the most interaction with the public, but there is not enough office space on the first floor so they are up on the third floor where there is more room.

Why then has the United Way stayed at 75 Market all this time? Hammond explained that the building gives the United Way a kind of visibility and branding in the community that an "ordinary" office building would not, explaining that "people know the building as '75 Market' first and United Way second." In addition the

[32] Jennifer Pawenski, interview by Katharine George, November 19, 2013.

building's location is central to the mission of the United Way. They are physically part of the community that we serve, which Hammond noted is, "very important to us."

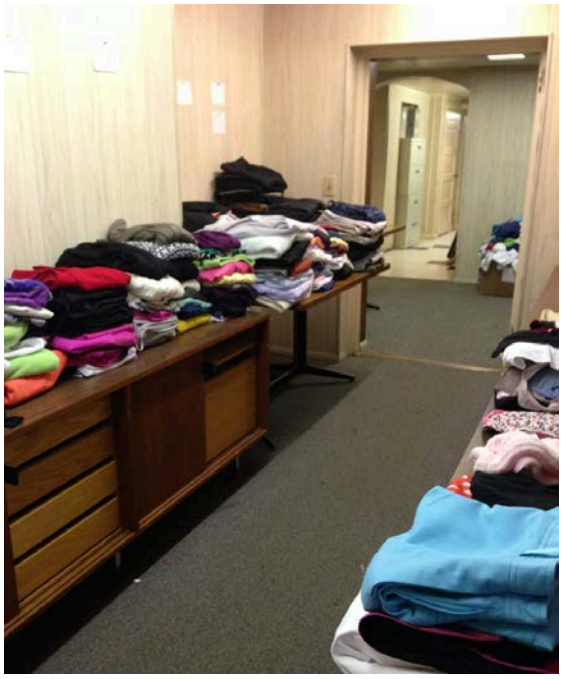
Figure 3.9 Example of communal spaces created to house office utilities such as printer and fax machine in the second floor hallway between offices (George, 2013).

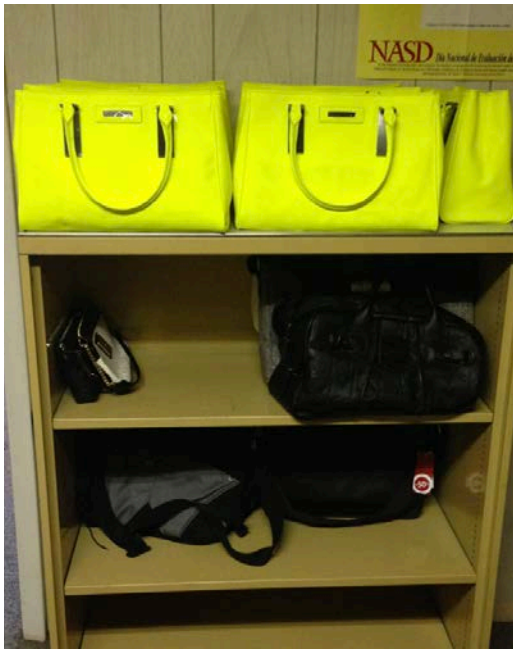
Figure 3.10 – 3.11 Examples of unusual office spaces on third floor (George, 2013).

For this reason, United Way's location informs and affects their work environment. Hammond observed that because of their central location in the community, they feel connected to the people they serve. They are in a location that is accessible to people living in Poughkeepsie without cars and therefore get more foot traffic from the community. In addition, the location prompts people of different socioeconomic backgrounds to apply to work for United Way, creating a more diverse organization.

In the fall of 2011 during the height of the "Occupy" movement, United Way became a hub of activity because the Occupy Poughkeepsie camp was in the park right across the street from 75 Market, the United Way ended up sharing their space with the Occupy campers. They allowed them to use their bathrooms and hold meetings in their conference rooms. Because United Way is a non-profit organization that cares for the public, Hammond felt that this created an important space for discussion between the Occupy Poughkeepsie organizers and the employees of United Way, which would never have occurred if not for their location. In short, Hammond felt that "[United Way] is a different organization because 'we are here,' because of this building."

Figure 3.12 – 3.14 Basement of United Way, used as storage for donated items that are organized like a thrift store for monthly community days (George, 2013).





CONCLUSION

"Living with historic preservation" holds a double meaning: it refers to the physical challenges of living with historic buildings whose architecture and design are not easily changed. But it also refers to the history, or *stories* of the space that are preserved by its users. By inhabiting a space with a (his)story separate from its functions today, users tend to gravitate towards certain parts of the space's past depending on the physical nature or appearance of the building and the type of activity it holds.

The three Poughkeepsie case studies showed a correlation between the type of histories preserved by users and physical appearances of a building in combination with the type of business conducted there.

The Poughkeepsie Trust Co. building has a history that is kept ever-present by its space. The secretary's comment that many visitors ask about the building's history upon walking into the lobby shows the past is continually kept in the mind of its users and occupants. It appears that the more often visitors and clients inquire, the more likely employees are to know at least some details of the building's history. In addition, small physical reminders exist in the daily life of the office such as walking through the giant vault door to make a photocopy or moving up and down the grand wooden staircase in. In a space where the infrastructure of a past life is so readily visible, the likelihood of the building's *factual* history to be known rises.

Factual is a key word in the remembered history of the Poughkeepsie Trust Co. building. Because it is a District Attorney's office, they do not gain anything monetarily from praising and promoting the building's history. Their clients may recognize the building as distinct but it does not bring them any more business then if they were across the way at City Hall. From observation, employees are able to recount the basic factual history of their office: that it was a bank, and also use the building's central location and distinct appearance to direct visitors.

In comparison, the Cunneen-Hackett Art Center stands to gain a lot by the embellishment of its building's histories. Like the Trust Co., the Vassar Street buildings stand out in the landscape of downtown Poughkeepsie. The colorful Victorian exterior raises questions in the visitors mind about the history of the building—when was it built? Who built it and why? But unlike the DA's office, much of the Art Center's business comes from the appealing aesthetic of the building and its history. The quirky exterior also helps set the tone for the eclectic mix of businesses and patrons that is found at the culture and arts center. Chamber music concerts in the Victorian parlor, "murder mystery" themed bachelorette parties and sweet sixteen's and Vassar related fundraisers are drawn to the building's history and style. Thus, it makes sense that those who work at and commonly visit the Arts Center know the history of the buildings—it's part of their sales pitch.

But the type of history told by the Cunneen-Hackett Arts Center reflects the importance of a kind of mythology to their business. The stories told go beyond the basic facts into rumor, hear-say and tangential historical connection. The basic history that the Home for Aged Men building was built on the foundations of Matthew

Vassar's childhood home leads to a story (told by Virginia Hancock) about young Matthew picking a flower from the magnolia tree outside his home (supposedly the same one there today) and placing it on Abraham Lincoln's funeral train as it passed through Poughkeepsie. In addition, the Arts Center touts that all the fireplaces in the building are the originals from Vassar's home (even though the Home for Aged Men building is at least three times the size of Vassar's home with twice as many fire places).

With regards to the Vassar Institute building, a similar mythology on the history of the plot is important to the Arts Center's business. The story told is that the Institute building was built on the foundations of Matthew Vassar's first brewery that burned down in a horrific fire that also killed his brother. This is true, but it is beyond the basic facts and definitely beyond the history known by the District Attorney's office about its respective building. Such stories place the Arts Center in a position of historical importance in the community.

The Arts Center is also using the history of the Institute plot to arrange a "Vassar Beer Fest" this coming fall, another way of positioning itself in the community with history. It is a fundraising event to be held in early September 2014 that celebrates the history of Cunneen-Hackett and Matthew Vassar's Brewery. There will be a competition for the best home-brew as well as music, food and cultural programming. Such histories allow for the continued growth of Cunneen-Hackett and thus are of great importance to its users.

But what happens to the history of a building whose physical appearance does not attract inquiries and whose business does not need stories to sustain it? An answer

can be found at 75 Market where the stories of the building are about its relationship to the present. Most employees of United Way do not know even the basic history of the building, but what they will talk about are the challenges and advantages of the space. First, the advantage of its location in the downtown Poughkeepsie business district is a tool for directing visitors and engaging with the community. Its location has provided the present space with its own stories such as the Occupy movement's campsite across the street or police activity on Market Street. The Adriance Memorial Library a block away also increases foot traffic past 75 Market.

Other ways the employees interact with the history of 75 Market is simply through its age: the repairs needed, the heating, the windows, the creaky steps and of course the presence of a ghost. The ghost of United Way has acquired the name "Mr. Samuels" yet only Donald Hammond knew Mr. Samuels's story, that he was a resident said to have died in one of the third floor bedrooms. Thus, the stories most people tell about Mr. Samuels are just how he turns on printers and makes loud noises. The stories heard at 75 Market are more about its place in the present than the past. It is a way by which its current users position themselves in the building and associate themselves with their surroundings.

By comparison to the Poughkeepsie Trust Company and Cunneen-Hackett buildings, the banal physical appearance and unrelated business of United Way make its way of preserving history through personal stories about the present that would not have occurred with out the building's location and age.

So what does living with historic preservation mean? In the case of these three buildings in the City of Poughkeepsie, it means the physical environment shapes the particular way its users preserve a building's past. What the building looks like on the inside and out, and the importance of history to the occupant's mission and business all influence how, and what kinds of stories are passed and preserved. In many ways this shows the importance of historic preservation: as Mumford stated, "the things that we can see and touch are those that awaken our imagination."[33] Without the physical reminder of time and place, would our imaginations and memories awaken in the same way?

[33] Lewis Mumford, "The Value of Local History" paper read at Troutbeck, 15 September 1926, *Dutchess County Historical Society Year Book,* Vol. 74, 1989, 11.

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